



# DJJ Partnership

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## Hopkins helps move DJJ into new area

Eric Hopkins, an investigator in the Inspector General's Office, made a bit of state history late in 2007 when he became the first person outside of the Virginia State Police Department's 75-year history to attend and graduate from its prestigious State Police Training Academy.

Eric's attendance in the 18-week training allows him during the course of his duties with DJJ to have true law enforcement powers, including the power to arrest persons violating the law on DJJ property, as well as to conduct criminal investi-

**Eric Hopkins**

gations. Prior to this change, DJJ could only conduct administrative investigations into violations of department policies and procedure.

Why the shift in philosophy for the Inspector General's operation? According to Eric, it flows from a need to "better manage the caseload of incidents we normally would refer to the Virginia State Police." He went on to say, "We know our facilities, we know our employees, this just makes sense for us to do this and not have to refer things to an outside agency."

**Graduation day at the Virginia State Police headquarters**

DJJ administration gave its blessing to allow the Inspector General's Office to have law enforcement powers because the agency found it difficult for State Police to move into an investigation that DJJ had started as an internal investigation. As an employer, we can ask staff to submit to requests that law enforcement cannot and so it causes evidentiary problems later if the investigation does result in criminal charges.

Secondly, the change is intended to raise the level of professionalism and well as the profile of the Inspector General's Office. It is felt that having a

State Police trained investigator will provide this agency a higher level of product in terms of all investigations and reports generated in the future. Staff will also benefit from this level of professionalism because they can expect that when an investigation is

initiated, it will be conducted in a fair and unbiased manner by someone who has been trained professionally consistent with the best investigators in our Commonwealth.

The training at the State Police Academy began for Eric in February 2007 and focused on academics in areas such as interpretation of laws and procedures, as well as physical training, firearms training, officer survival simulations, and traffic stop procedures. It really covered the range of skills that a police officer would need to have to work, but was also geared specifically to how the Virginia State Police operates.

Eric Hopkins says he feels the training will definitely strengthen his investigative skills, where his professional interest remains. The nearly four-year veteran of DJJ and University of Richmond graduate says he enjoys his work for the department and has no plans to change assignments. He just has a little more authority to carry out those assignments now that he is a Virginia State Police Academy graduate!